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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/10/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KN](#) [TP](#) [TW](#)  
SUBJECT: NORTH KOREANS AT STP HOSPITAL

Classified By: Ambassador Barrie Walkley for reason 1.4 b and d

1.(U) Since 2004, EUCOM has used almost \$450,000 of Humanitarian Assistance funds to renovate buildings and upgrade facilities at the General Hospital in Sao Tome and Principe (STP). When in STP, Ambassador Walkley often stops at the hospital to check on conditions. During discussions with hospital management May 4, the Ambassador learned that expatriate physicians at the hospital are now primarily Cuban and North Korean.

¶2. (U) There are currently 7 Cuban doctors working at the hospital (2 gynecologists, 1 pediatrician, 1 ear/nose/throat, 1 general practitioner, 1 anesthesiologist and a psychologist). Cuban doctors have been in STP for at least 10 years, with each batch staying for a two-year tour. Over the years, 4 have sought asylum in STP (including the physician currently running the clinic at the VOA installation on the island). Another 3 managed to avoid returning to Cuba and found jobs in Portugal.

¶3. (C) The surprise is that there are now 5 North Korean doctors at the hospital, plus an interpreter (2 gyno, 1 ear/nose/throat, 1 orthopedist and 1 surgeon). None of the doctors speaks Portuguese, hence the need for the interpreter. Gian Meyer (a retired Swiss physician who volunteers at the hospital) told the Ambassador that there have been problems with the North Koreans since their arrival. They have been asking patients for money/bribes before treatment. One of the North Koreans is being requested to leave (serious malpractice accusations).

¶2. (C) COMMENT: STP, one of the world's poorest countries, is ready to accept help from almost anyone. However, as there is no North Korean embassy in STP, it is a puzzle how the North Korean doctors ended up there. Speculation is that Obiang Nguema of Equatorial Guinea may have been the contact. There is an irony here: physician salaries at the STP hospital are being financed by Taiwan. Taiwan thus appears to be financing the North Korean presence.

WALKLEY